

PC CASES

INTRODUCTION

PCs are often described in terms of their components: processor, RAM, graphics card and so on. However, the case that houses these expensive parts is often ignored. This is a serious oversight, as the case is as important to your PC's stability and performance as its motherboard or processor.

A well-designed PC case should be able to deal with the heat generated by your components, keeping them nice and cool so that your PC runs more reliably. It should make minimal noise in the process, so you don't have to put up with whining fans every time you turn on your PC. It should also be easy to work on. This is especially important if you regularly open your case to upgrade or replace parts.

This month we've gathered 18 PC cases that cost from £24 to £260 including VAT. We've concentrated on tower cases, but we've included a few Home Theater, or HTPC, cases for those who want to build a Media Center PC. Whether you're building a new PC or giving your current one a new look, you'll find a case that suits your needs here.

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A PC case is more than just a box for your components. The right case can make your PC quieter, cooler and more efficient. Build a better PC with one of the 18 on test

BOXING CLEVER

Choosing a...
PC Case

You can buy a PC case for less than £30 including VAT, but it's well worth spending a little more. A good case should be well ventilated, easy to work on and fairly quiet. However, few cases manage all three at once, so you should think about which of these aspects are most important to you.

FANNING THE FLAMES

A PC is essentially a metal box containing a lot of very hot components. If the heat isn't dealt with properly, your PC will slow down and become unstable.

Most PC cases have two fans to provide airflow. An intake fan placed low on the front of the case sucks air in and over the hard disks, while an exhaust fan mounted high on the rear of the case expels hot air that rises from your motherboard and components.

Two such fans should provide sufficient cooling for all but the most powerful PCs. However, this depends on the design of the case and the speed of the fans. Fans come in many different sizes. The larger the fan, the slower it has to spin to move the same amount of air. This means that larger fans tend to be quieter than smaller fans, while still providing the same level of cooling. Most fans come with motherboard fan header plugs, so your PC can control their speed based on the

temperature inside the case. Others come with only Molex plugs and so run constantly at a set speed.

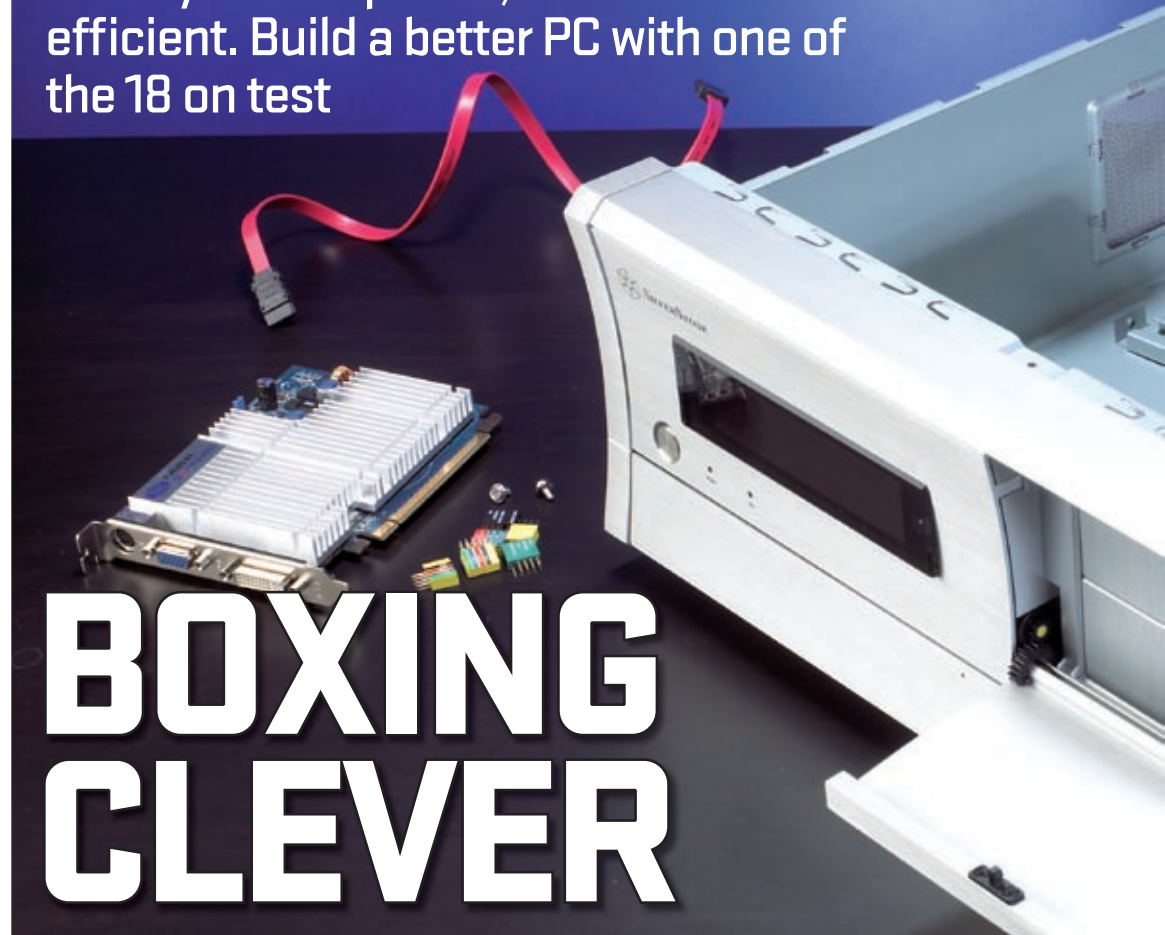
FEEL THE NOISE

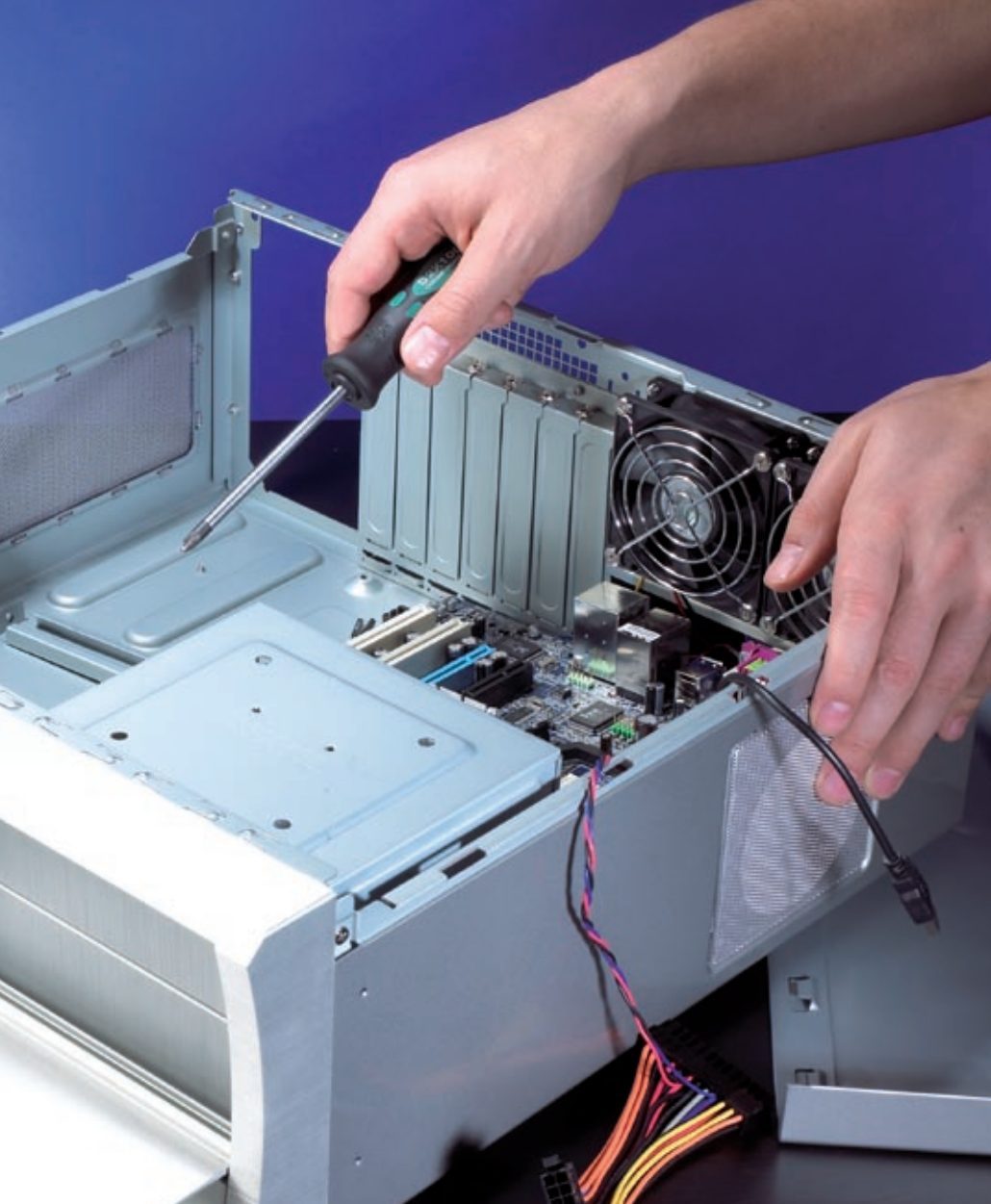
The case fans contribute only part of the noise that the finished PC will make. Most modern PCs have a number of other fans to keep components such as the processor, graphics card and power supply unit (PSU) cool. Some of these fans have automatic speed controls, while others will run at full speed all the time.

Some of the cases here, such as Cooler Master's CM 690, are designed entirely with airflow in mind. They have lots of fan mountings and grilles, which is great for letting hot air out, but it can also let noise escape. Others, such as Quiet PC's Acousticase 360, have noise-dampening materials inside to absorb noise, although this limits their ability to dissipate heat. We found that Antec's P182 provided a good balance these two goals.

DRIVE-IN

Hard disks also make noise when in use. For this reason many cases have rubber grommets on their hard disk bays to help stop the drive's vibrations being transmitted to the case. We mention in the individual reviews when a case has this feature.





All the cases in the group except mCubed's HFX have at least four internal 3½in drive bays for hard disks. In addition they all have at least one external 3½in bay for a memory card reader or floppy drive, plus at least two external 5¼in bays for optical drives. Only a couple of cases have built-in flaps to cover your optical drives. For the rest, you'll need to buy optical drives that match the case's colour scheme if you want everything to look smart.

FRONT END

If your current PC case is a drab old thing that hides under your desk, it may be time for a makeover. Many of the cases here will make you proud of your PC, even if the same old components are behind the side panel. There are a few things you should think about before you choose your case, however.

It's worth considering the number and placement of ports on your chosen case, especially if you use specific ones every day. Most cases have two USB ports, headphone and microphone sockets and a FireWire or eSATA port on the front. Check the table on page 106 for more details.

Some of the cases have a front door, and while these help to make your PC look smart, you'll need to open it every time you want to access the optical drives and in some cases even the power button.

DOWN TOOLS

Each case on test can take an ATX motherboard. However, if you plan to use an unusually large graphics card or a big processor cooler, you're better off with a roomier case such as Enermax's Uber Chakra or Akasa's Eclipse-62 V2.

Most of the cases here have some tool-free features, such as clips that hold the expansion cards or thumbscrews for the side panel. Many also have tool-free drive bays with plastic rails that clip to the side of your drives. We mention these in the reviews where applicable.

Each case in the group had sufficient space for our fairly large test PSU, which is 175mm long. There's no standard length for PSUs, so be warned that Antec's P182, Nexus's Caterpillar, Xilence's X2 and Thermaltake's Soprano DX won't take any PSU longer than this.

HTPC

All three of the HTPCs reviewed here can take standard ATX components, so you don't have to worry about buying specially sized motherboards or half-height expansion cards. This is convenient but it does make them fairly large. Despite being the same width as hi-fi components, they are around 70mm deeper, so check that they fit in your rack or TV stand before you buy. They also come with Vacuum Fluorescent Displays, or VFDs, which can display information about the video or audio files you're currently playing.

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MIDI TOWER CASES

EZCOOL K-110

★★★★

£24 inc VAT
From www.eclipsecomputers.com



EZcool's K-110 is the only case in the group to include a PSU. It's a generic model rated at 500W but, as we found in our PSU group test in *Shopper 234*, generic PSUs rarely deliver their rated wattage.

The front of the case looks cheap, although flip-down covers conceal the top two 5¼in drive bays so your optical drives don't have to match the case's colour. The case has USB2 and audio ports on the right-hand side at the very front, but no FireWire port.

Opening the side panel reveals a basic and sparse interior. There are plenty of drive bays, but they don't have plastic clips to make it easy to fit drives without a screwdriver. There are no fans, so you'd have to add a 120mm rear fan to stop all but the most basic PCs overheating.

EZcool's basic K-110 case would suit budget system builders who don't need a powerful PSU or much heat dissipation. Most people would be better off buying a Gigabyte GZ-X1 for around £30 and fitting a branded PSU, though.

MIDI TOWER CASE 7x 3½in drive bays, 4x 5¼in drive bays, 500W PSU, 410x180x455mm, 6.6kg

PART CODE CASEZCH110

DETAILS www.cjcomputers.co.uk

✓ PSU supplied; inexpensive

✗ No fans supplied; no drive vibration dampening

COOLER MASTER Elite 330

★★★★

£27 inc VAT
From www.yoyotech.co.uk



Most of the Elite 330's front consists of a black metal grille that helps to keep the interior of the case cool. The ports are positioned on the front, but there's no FireWire or eSATA port for fast external hard disks.

A pair of thumbscrews hold the side panel in place. This has two vents cut into it, one of which is attached to a duct that points towards your processor fan. You can replace this with an 80mm fan if necessary. A single 120mm fan at the rear of the case expels hot air. It's quiet and can plug into a motherboard fan header.

The drive bays are tool-free, with plastic clips that lock into the bay and hold the drive in place. You have to punch out rather than unscrew the metal blanking plates to fit expansion plates at the rear, so you can't refit them if you remove a card in the future.

The Elite 330 is a reasonable budget case, but Gigabyte's GZ-X1 costs only £1 more, has a FireWire port and better cooling.

MIDI TOWER CASE 7x 3½in drive bays, 4x 5¼in drive bays, 413x203x486mm, 6.0kg

PART CODE RC-330-KKN1-GP

DETAILS www.coolermaster.com

✓ Inexpensive

✗ Only one fan fitted; no drive vibration dampening

GIGABYTE GZ-X1

★★★★

£28 inc VAT
From www.pixmania.co.uk



This is an inexpensive case, but it looks fairly stylish.

A flap covers one of the 5¼in drive bays, but if you fit a second drive it will have to match the case's colour. A FireWire port is hidden beneath a sturdy flap at the bottom, along with the usual USB, headphone and microphone sockets. These ports will be hard to reach if you keep your PC on the floor.

The side panel is held on with thumbscrews. Inside there are tool-free clips for all the drive bays. Two 120mm fans are fitted, both of which are fairly quiet and have been wired neatly together so that they plug into a single motherboard fan header. One fan is at the front of the case and sucks air in over the hard disks, while the rear exhaust fan pushes the warm air out through the back. There's also a vent on the side of the case with a duct directed at the processor.

This is a good basic case, and the pair of quiet fans will take care of most cooling needs.

MIDI TOWER CASE 7x 3½in drive bays, 4x 5¼in drive bays, 410x185x478mm, 6.8kg

PART CODE GZ-X1 SPD

DETAILS www.giga-byte.com

✓ Inexpensive; intake and exhaust fans

✗ Ports at bottom of tower; no drive vibration dampening

APLUS CS-188AF

★★★★

£32 inc VAT
From www.scan.co.uk



Aplus's CS-188AF has a matt-black door with a rubbery finish, so it should be scratch-resistant. The door opens to just 90°, and you'll have to open it whenever you want to get at the power button or optical drives. The case's ports are more conveniently placed on the front right-hand side, although there's no FireWire port.

A speed control dial on the left controls the huge 220mm fan that dominates the side panel. This blows air directly on to the motherboard and other components. There are no other fans to draw air through the case, though. The large fan is also rather noisy, especially at full speed, and there's no filter to stop it blowing dust into your case.

Inside, the layout is identical to those of the three other budget cases, although it lacks the Gigabyte GZ-X1's tool-free drive bays. Like the other budget cases, the steel has been folded over at the edges to stop you cutting yourself. This case is good value, but we prefer the GZ-X1's tool-free drive bays and twin-fan layout.

MIDI TOWER CASE 7x 3½in drive bays, 4x 5¼in drive bays, 410x185x495mm, 7.0kg

PART CODE CS-188AF

DETAILS www.nanopoint.co.uk

✓ Huge side fan with speed control

✗ Fan is fairly noisy; no drive vibration dampening

XILENCE X2

★★★

£45 inc VAT
From www.quietpc.com



Xilence's X2 has an inverted layout. The power supply goes at the bottom of the case, and you install the motherboard upside down with the expansion ports at the top. The design means that none of your ports is where you'd expect and they're upside down, which can be annoying.

A large plastic duct inside the case channels air from a side vent to the processor cooler. The air is then expelled out through the back of the case by a noisier-than-average 120mm exhaust fan. The drive bay holds the hard disks sideways under the duct so their heat is also dealt with. It's a fairly good idea but it has its drawbacks. It works only if you have a standard processor cooler with a vertical fan that points towards the duct, and you have to unclip the duct every time you want to work on your PC.

The Xilence X2 has an interesting design that reminds us of Intel's clever but rarely seen BTX form factor. We don't feel that this case's advantages outweigh its limitations, however.

MIDI TOWER CASE 6x 3½in drive bays, 4x 5¼in drive bays, 440x200x535mm, 6.3kg

PART CODE GEH-X2

DETAILS www.xilence-power.com

✓ Designed for effective processor cooling

✗ Upside-down ports; no drive vibration dampening

COOLER MASTER CM 690

★★★★

£47 inc VAT
From www.yoyotech.co.uk



We were amazed at the low price of this case, as it looks as if it could cost twice as much. The front and top consist of a fine black steel grille, so there's plenty of airflow through the case.

The front 120mm fan glows blue through the grille and draws air over your hard disks. A second 120mm fan in the side panel blows air at the processor, and there's a 120mm exhaust fan at the rear. Each has motherboard fan header plugs fitted, and there are mountings for more fans in case you need more cooling.

Little touches make this feel like a more expensive case. It has cable tidies along the side of the motherboard area. The hard disks sit in pliable plastic caddies with rubber grommets that absorb vibrations. There are also 20 screws stored in a line down the side of the optical drive bays, so there's always one to hand.

This isn't the quietest case in the group, but it looks great, has plenty of cooling and is excellent value. It wins a Budget Buy award.

MIDI TOWER CASE 6x 3½in drive bays, 4x 5¼in drive bays, 482x213x525mm, 9.8kg

PART CODE RC-690-KKN1-GP

DETAILS www.coolermaster.com

✓ Looks great; three fans fitted; FireWire and eSATA ports

✗ Not very quiet

NEXUS Caterpillar Silent System

★★★★

£49 inc VAT
From www.aria.co.uk



The Caterpillar has the same inverted layout as Xilence's X2. Unlike the X2, it uses a standard pair of fans to move air through the case instead of a large air duct.

Due to the unusual layout, the graphics card sits near the top with its fan pointing up. This should mean that heat rises up and away from the card, but any advantage is lost as there's little airflow in this part of the case. This wouldn't be a problem with a double-slot graphics card such as the GeForce 8800GTS, which expels air through the back of the case.

The fans have motherboard header plugs and are quiet even at full speed. Nexus has also lined the case with noise-absorbing foam. However, the drive bays have no dampening system to absorb vibrations.

The Caterpillar's design is fairly confusing, but it's quiet and worth considering if you can't stretch to Antec's P182.

MIDI TOWER CASE 6x 3½in drive bays, 4x 5¼in drive bays, 437x197x529mm, 8.4kg
PART CODE CATERPILLAR
DETAILS www.nexustek.nl

- ☒ Very quiet fans; noise absorbing foam
- ☒ Upside-down ports; no drive vibration dampening

GIGABYTE Poseidon

★★★★★

£50 inc VAT
From www.aria.co.uk



The Poseidon is the cheapest case with a brushed aluminium front here. The design is pretty stylish, and includes an unusual LED-powered slide projector that beams the case's name on to the desk in front of it. You can create your own slide using the spare provided.

Despite being relatively small, it has plenty of space inside. It uses tool-free clips and thumbscrews, so you won't need a screwdriver to change a drive. Clip-on rails are provided, and the hard disk trays are placed sideways to make them easy to insert and remove.

Two 120mm fans, one front and one rear, provide plenty of airflow though the case and run very quietly. Both are controlled by a single motherboard fan header. The case's side panel has a steel mesh section for ventilation, or you can change it for the supplied plastic window.

The Poseidon is easy to build with good airflow and low noise. Cooler Master's CM 690 just beats it to an award with its lower price.

MIDI TOWER CASE 5x 3½in drive bays, 5x 5¼in drive bays, 440x200x495mm, 8.0kg
PART CODE GZ-XA1CA-ST5
DETAILS www.giga-byte.com

- ☒ Quiet fans; customisable side panel
- ☒ No drive vibration dampening

SILVERSTONE KL01 Kublai Series

★★★★★

£66 inc VAT
From www.scan.co.uk



The KL01 is very stylish, with a metal door that covers the optical drives. The USB, FireWire and audio ports are placed along the top front edge, so they're easy to access even if you keep the case on the floor.

The two 120mm fans provide good airflow through the case, and both have plugs for motherboard fan headers. The intake fan is mounted in a cleverly designed caddy that clips seamlessly into the grille on the front of the case. Removing this caddy gives you easy access to the internal hard disk bays.

The drives sit in vibration-dampening slide-in caddies. The top bay has an adaptor at the back with power and SATA connectors, so you can remove the drive while your PC is running if your motherboard supports hot-swapping.

This is a stylish, well-designed case and the hard disk caddy makes it easy to replace RAID hard disks. Cooler Master's CM 690 is a lot cheaper, though, and has more cooling.

MIDI TOWER CASE 5x 3½in drive bays, 5x 5¼in drive bays, 432x206x480mm, 8.5kg
PART CODE KL01-B
DETAILS www.silverstonetek.com

- ☒ Hot swappable hard disk caddy
- ☒ Quite expensive

THERMALTAKE Soprano DX

★★★★

£78 inc VAT
From www.ginger6.com



The Soprano DX's black aluminium door, with its curvy design and blue LED, may make a striking impression, but it's the huge perspex window on the side panel that really draws the eye. This case is ideal for those who want to show off their fancy-looking components, and with all your kit on show the lockable side panel and front door might prove useful.

Two internal fans keep air circulating. The front fan is an unusual 140mm model, and draws plenty of air in past the hard disks. These sit in a removable cage with rubber grommets that help to reduce vibrations. Both front and rear fans have 4-pin Molex rather than motherboard header connectors, so your motherboard can't control their speed and they're fairly noisy when the PC is idle.

If you want to show off your components, the Soprano is a good choice. It's one of the more expensive cases in the group, though, and Antec's P182 is well worth the extra pound.

MIDI TOWER CASE 7x 3½in drive bays, 4x 5¼in drive bays, 478x210x497mm, 10.5kg
PART CODE VE7000BWS
DETAILS www.thermaltake.com

- ☒ Huge side window
- ☒ Quite expensive; fans fairly noisy at idle

ANTEC P182

★★★★★

£79 inc VAT
From www.ebuyer.com



The P182's gunmetal finish looks great. Its side panels are designed to absorb noise and radiate heat, which makes the case heavy. The lockable door is double-hinged, and folds back completely.

The interior is cleverly laid out to keep your components cool. The PSU sits at the bottom of the case, and a 120mm fan draws air over the hard disks. Along with the usual rear fan there's one at the top of the case, so plenty of air flows over the motherboard. All three fans have three-speed manual switches, and the rear and top fans' controls are easy to access on the back of the case.

Both removable drive bays have vibration-dampening and slide-in trays. The downside of separating the PSU and motherboard is that you have to thread the cables through some tight spaces to the motherboard.

The P182 is quiet, cool and very well built. Once you've got your components into it you'll be very happy you made the effort.

MIDI TOWER CASE 7x 3½in drive bays, 4x 5¼in drive bays, 520x210x510mm, 14.0kg
PART CODE 0761345-81820-9
DETAILS www.antec.com

- ☒ Cool and quiet
- ☒ A little awkward to build

AKASA Eclipse-62 V2

★★★★

£85 inc VAT
From www.aria.co.uk



Akasa's Eclipse has a strong industrial feel. The plastic front feels hard-wearing rather than fancy, and the supplied wheels make it easy to move. The only ports provided are two USB ports under a front flap.

The whole case feels incredibly sturdy, but you can disassemble it completely as all the panels and internal bays are held together by chunky thumbscrews, as are the blanking plates for the expansion card slots.

The motherboard tray is removable, and wide enough to fit dual-processor server motherboards. Two 120mm fans are fitted in the usual positions at the front and rear of the case. Both can be plugged into motherboard fan headers for automatic speed control, but they run quietly even at full speed.

There's lots of room inside this wide case, but the drive bays have no frills such as removable caddies or sound dampening. If you're looking for a case that's very easy to work on, it's a good choice, but Antec's P182 has better cooling and sound insulation.

MIDI TOWER CASE 7x 3½in drive bays, 4x 5¼in drive bays, 460x240x560mm, 6.9kg
PART CODE AK-BKCSE-01V2
DETAILS www.akasa.co.uk

- ☒ Spacious; supplied with wheels
- ☒ No drive vibration dampening

MIDI TOWER CASES/HTPC CASES

QUIET PC Acousticase 360

★★★★★

£85 inc VAT
From www.quietpc.com



This case looks pretty basic from the outside, although it does have four USB ports. It comes with a box of acoustic dampening foam, which is adhesive and has been cut to fit the inside of the case. It took us just a few minutes to fit the foam before building our PC.

The foam succeeded in reducing the level of noise coming from inside the PC. However, as this case is supplied without any fans and we were using a silent fanless power supply for testing, it quickly heated up inside. We'd recommend fitting at least one exhaust fan, which is an additional cost on top of an already expensive case. There are clip-in 120mm fan mountings at the front and rear.

The removable hard disk bay can take up to five drives. These screw into rubber grommets to reduce vibrations. With one quiet fan and a silent PSU this could form the basis of a very quiet PC, but most users will be happier with the slightly cheaper and ready-to-build P182.

MIDI TOWER CASE 7x 3½in drive bays, 4x 5¼in drive bays, 460x210x430mm, 11.0kg
PART CODE www.quietpc.com
DETAILS www.quietpc.com
✓ Noise-absorbing foam
✗ No fans supplied

ENERMAX Uber Chakra

★★★★★

£90 inc VAT
From www.xcase.co.uk



This is the tallest case in the group, and one of the biggest overall. The design of the front is fairly unadventurous, but the blue LEDs on the front fan look good through the black grille.

The side of the case is the flashiest part. A large figure-of-eight grille is emblazoned with Enermax's logo. Behind one side of this is a massive 220mm fan adorned with blue LEDs. A switch above the fan turns off the LEDs and another sets the fan to intake, exhaust or off.

Blasting cool air into your system may seem like a good idea, but the lack of a dust filter means plenty of dust will be blown in with it. We found that sucking air out was pretty effective, or you can shut down the fan if you're just browsing the web.

There's loads of space inside the chassis, and the drives slide into place with clip-on plastic rails. This is a good case, but Cooler Master's CM 690 has a similar cooling arrangement and is less than half the price.

MIDI TOWER CASE 8x 3½in drive bays, 5x 5¼in drive bays, 552x216x550mm, 7.8kg
PART CODE www.enermax.co.uk
DETAILS www.enermax.co.uk
✓ Huge side fan with speed control
✗ No drive vibration dampening

ZALMAN Z-Machine GT1000

★★★★★

£260 inc VAT
From www.quietpc.com



This is by far the most expensive tower case in the group, but it's easy to see why. It's incredibly sturdy, beautifully finished and made entirely of aluminium to radiate excess heat.

It has three quiet fans, all with red LEDs. The 120mm rear exhaust fan is fairly standard, but the front pair of 92mm fans give the case its distinctive look and suck plenty of air in over the hard disks. The fans have motherboard headers, or you can use a Molex connector that lets you select from low or high speeds.

The front hard disk bay has an ingenious tool-free and vibration dampening system. You simply push the hard disks in and a bar drops down to hold them in place. Two further hard disks can be clamped to the floor of the case.

The side of the case has a pair of doors that are held shut by magnets. The rear door has a large plastic window. The GT1000 is expensive, but it's easy to build, quiet and looks great.

MIDI TOWER CASE 7x 3½in drive bays, 4x 5¼in drive bays, 450x220x480mm, 12.5kg
PART CODE www.zalman.co.kr
DETAILS www.zalman.co.kr
✓ Easy to build; beautifully finished
✗ Very expensive

THERMALTAKE Bach

★★★★★

£109 inc VAT
From www.cclonline.com



Thermaltake's Bach HTPC case has space for three optical drives behind a large front flap. The top drive ejects its tray through a smaller hinged door, but the case has no eject button so you'll have to use the remote control. There's plenty of space for hard disks, but the hard disk bays have no vibration dampening.

The front display is a two-line green VFD, so it's very bright. Its software is easy to install and can be set to display information such as DVD chapter information and MP3 track names from within Windows Media Center. All the HTPCs on test come with the same remote, which works with Media Center.

There are two 60mm fans at the rear and an 80mm fan at the front. The case is fairly cramped, though, so we'd recommend sticking to a cool processor, such as a mid-range Intel Core 2 Duo. Disappointingly the fans can't be controlled by the motherboard and run at full speed all the time. It's not a bad case, but we'd rather spend the extra £14 to buy Silverstone's Grandia GD01.

HTPC CASE 5x 3½in drive bays, 3x 5¼in drive bays, 170x430x450mm, 8.5kg
PART CODE www.thermaltake.com
DETAILS www.thermaltake.com
✓ Three fans fitted
✗ No drive vibration dampening

SILVERSTONE Grandia GD01

★★★★★

£123 inc VAT
From www.afterhours.co.uk



We really like the Grandia's simple aluminium front. The ports and a handy memory card reader are tucked behind one flap, while up to three optical drives are hidden behind another. It's neat, but you have to open the flap manually to change discs.

Two 80mm fans at the back of the case provide air circulation and have motherboard header plugs. You may need to fit an additional fan at the front of the case to get sufficient airflow. The front fan mounts are for 92mm fans, which tend to spin fairly slowly and so should be quiet. The case's hard disk bay has vibration-dampening foam and rubber grommets to keep hard disk noise from being transmitted to the case.

The VFD screen is the best in the group, thanks to its large size and resolution, and its blue colour resembles a fancy car stereo display. With its good looks, well-designed drive bay and great VFD, this is the best HTPC case in the group. It's a Best Buy.

HTPC CASE 7x 3½in drive bays, 2x 5¼in drive bays, 170x430x430mm, 7.0kg
PART CODE www.silverstonetek.com
DETAILS www.silverstonetek.com
✓ Stylish; high-resolution VFD
✗ No automatic optical drive flap

MCUBED HFX Classic Heatsink Case

★★★★★

£249 inc VAT
From www.quietpc.com



Solid aluminium fins run down each side of this heavyweight HTPC case. These take heat from heatpipes inside the case and dissipate it into the air, so there's no need for fans. Barring drive noise, the system is completely silent.

However, building this system properly is difficult and expensive. The instructions aren't the best we've seen, and you have to do things in a strict order for everything to function properly. Worse still, you have to buy extras such as heat pipes for the processor (£66 inc VAT) and graphics card (£50 inc VAT) to keep your components cool. There are no internal 3½in drive bays, so you'll also have to invest in a caddy to fit one of the 5¼in bays.

It has the same VFD as Thermaltake's Bach, and a fake front for your optical drive ensures that it fits in with the style of the front of the case. This is the only case in the group that will let you build a totally silent Media Center PC, but its real cost is closer to £400.

HTPC CASE 1x 3½in drive bays, 3x 5¼in drive bays, 145x430x450mm, 12.0kg
DETAILS www.mcube-tech.com
✓ Silent if properly equipped
✗ Very expensive

CASES

MIDI TOWER CASES

BUDGET BUY

MANUFACTURER	EZCOOL	COOLER MASTER	GIGABYTE	APLUS	XILENCE	COOLER MASTER	NEXUS	GIGABYTE	SILVERSTONE
Model name	K-110	Elite 330	GZ-X1	CS-188AF	X2	CM 690	Caterpillar Silent System	Poseidon	KL01 Kublai Series
Rating	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Case	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower
PORTS									
USB ports	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
FireWire ports	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
eSATA ports	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Headphone port	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Microphone port	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PHYSICAL									
Size HxWxD	410x180x455mm	413x203x486mm	410x185x478mm	410x185x495mm	440x200x535mm	482x213x525mm	437x197x529mm	440x200x495mm	432x206x480mm
Weight	6.6kg	6.0kg	6.8kg	7.0kg	6.3kg	9.8kg	8.4kg	8.0kg	8.5kg
Internal 3½in drive bays	6	5	6	5	5	5	5	4	4
External 3½in drive bays	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5¼in drive bays	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5
Fan mounts	1x 80mm, 2x 120mm	1x 80mm, 2x 120mm	1x 80mm, 2x 120mm	2x 120mm, 1x 120mm	3x 120mm	7x 120mm	2x 120mm	2x 120mm	2x 120mm
Fans supplied	None	1x 120mm	2x 120mm	1x 220mm	1x 120mm	3x 120mm	2x 120mm	2x 120mm	2x 120mm
Supplied PSU	Yes (500W)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
BUYING INFORMATION									
Warranty	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB
Price inc VAT	£24 inc VAT	£27 inc VAT	£28 inc VAT	£32 inc VAT	£45 inc VAT	£47 inc VAT	£49 inc VAT	£50 inc VAT	£66 inc VAT
Supplier	www.eclipsecomputers.com	www.yoyotech.co.uk	www.pixmania.co.uk	www.scan.co.uk	www.quietpc.com	www.yoyotech.co.uk	www.aria.co.uk	www.aria.co.uk	www.scan.co.uk
Details	www.cjcomputers.co.uk	www.cooler-master.com	www.giga-byte.com	www.nanopoint.co.uk	www.xilence-power.com	www.cooler-master.com	www.nexus.nl	www.giga-byte.com	www.silverstonetek.com
Part Code	CASEZCH110	RC-330-KKN1-GP	GZ-X1 SPD	CS-188AF	GEH-X2	RC-690-KKN1-GP	CATERPILLAR	GZ-XA1CA-STS	KL01-B

BEST BUY

MOST WANTED

HTPC CASES

BEST BUY

MANUFACTURER	THERMALTAKE	ANTEC	AKASA	QUIET PC	ENERMAX	ZALMAN	THERMALTAKE	SILVERSTONE	MCUBED
Model name	Soprano DX	P182	Eclipse-62 V2	Acousticase 360	Uber Chakra	Z-Machine GT1000	Bach	Grandia GD01	HFX Classic Heatsink Case
Rating	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Case	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower	HTPC	HTPC	HTPC
PORTS									
USB ports	2	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	0
FireWire ports	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0
eSATA ports	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Headphone port	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Microphone port	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
PHYSICAL									
Size HxWxD	478x210x497mm	520x210x510mm	460x240x560mm	460x210x430mm	552x216x550mm	450x220x480mm	170x430x450mm	170x430x430mm	145x430x450mm
Weight	10.5kg	14.0kg	6.9kg	11.0kg	7.8kg	12.5kg	8.5kg	7.0kg	12.0kg
Internal 3½in drive bays	5	6	5	5	6	6	5	6	0
External 3½in drive bays	2	1	2	2	2	1	0	1	1
5¼in drive bays	4	4	4	4	5	4	3	2	3
Fan mounts	1x 120mm, 1x 140mm	5x 120mm	2x 120mm	2x 120mm	2x 120mm, 1x 220mm	2x 92mm, 1x 120mm	2x 60mm, 1x 80mm	3x 80mm, 2x 92mm	None
Fans supplied	1x 120mm, 1x 140mm	3x 120mm	2x 120mm	None	1x 120mm, 1x 220mm	2x 92mm, 1x 120mm	2x 60mm, 1x 80mm	2x 80mm	None
Supplied PSU	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
BUYING INFORMATION									
Warranty	One year RTB	Three years RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB
Price inc VAT	£78 inc VAT	£79 inc VAT	£85 inc VAT	£85 inc VAT	£90 inc VAT	£260 inc VAT	£109 inc VAT	£123 inc VAT	£249 inc VAT
Supplier	www.ginger6.com	www.ebuyer.com	www.aria.co.uk	www.quietpc.com	www.xcase.co.uk	www.quietpc.com	www.cdonline.com	www.afterhours.co.uk	www.quietpc.com
Details	www.thermatake.com	www.antic.com	www.akasa.co.uk	www.quietpc.com	www.enermax.co.uk	www.zalman.co.kr	www.thermatake.com	www.silverstonetek.com	www.mcubed-tech.com
Part Code	VE7000BWS	0761345-81820-9	AK-BKCE-01V2	NONE	ECA5001	GT1000BL	VB8001BNS	GD01S-MXR	NONE

Labs verdict Cases

The cases in this Labs come in a wide range of prices and address different needs, but three stand out. Cooler Master's CM 690 is ideal if you want a case that's easy to work on and has good cooling. It has three fans pre-fitted and room for many more. There's

plenty of room for upgrades, it looks great and it's a steal at £41. It wins a Budget Buy award.

If you want something a little more sophisticated, Antec's P182 fits the bill. It's beautifully designed and constructed, and noticeably quieter than the CM 690. It may be

a bit of a pain to work on, but it's great value at £79, so it wins a Best Buy award.

Finally, Silverstone's Grandia GD01 is our pick of the HTPC cases. It looks good, has a great VFD display and is perfect for a living room. It's a Best Buy.

MIDI TOWER CASE

MIDI TOWER CASE

MIDI TOWER CASE

HTPC CASE

COOLER MASTER CM 690
★★★★★



ANTEC P182
★★★★★



ZALMAN Z-Machine GT1000
★★★★★



SILVERSTONE Grandia GD01
★★★★★

